

To: Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Becca Ferguson on behalf of Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: May 11, 2021

Re: Testimony in support of LD 1682, An Act To Require Consideration of Climate and Equity Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission

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Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, my name is Becca Ferguson and I am writing on behalf of Maine Youth For Climate Justice (MYCJ) in support of LD 1682, An Act To Require Consideration of Climate and Equity Impacts by the Public Utilities Commission.

Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ) is a coalition of over 250 youth across the state of Maine who fight for bold climate action, a just transition, and a livable future in Maine. We acknowledge that the climate crisis is rooted in systemic failures and forms of oppression, and disproportionately affects marginalized communities. We aim to fight for climate justice, bold and urgent climate action, and a just and equitable transition in Maine. We work to uplift the voices of folks who have been historically excluded from narratives around the climate crisis, environmental activism, and political conversation.

In Maine, the negative impacts of climate change are already being seen by frontline communities, particularly Indigenous communities. There has been increasingly erratic flooding and warming waters that have altered waterways and fish populations that the Wabanaki community has relied on for food and travel. Invasive species have been introduced including the emerald ash borer, whose population has increased with a warming climate and is threatening the growth of ash trees which are used in Wabanaki basket weaving and other culturally significant practices. These are just a few examples but there are many more negative impacts experienced by the frontline communities and environmental justice populations.

As youth we know our future relies on actions taken to eliminate carbon emissions and prioritize environmental justice. Our goals as an organization align with this bill and this is why we urge you to pass it. LD 1682 would require the PUC to reduce greenhouse emissions and mitigate the disproportionate energy burdens that frontline communities, environmental justice populations, and utility customers who are underserved by utility or electricity policies, programs and systems due to geography, race, income or other socioeconomic factors.

MYCJ knows that it is important to hold the governmental entities that regulate our utility services and usage accountable to the climate and Maine citizens. Passing this bill is essential to ensure that moving forward, the PUC is making decisions that benefit the people of Maine, particularly the people who have been unfairly burdened with the negative impacts of the climate crisis. We urge you to vote “ought to pass” for LD 1682.

Thank you for your consideration

Becca Ferguson and Maine Youth for Climate Justice